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## Would AT&T offer consumers low cable rates?

To the editor,

Your recent letter "Comcast needs stiff competition from AT&T" (April 2) seemed to give some dubious credibility to the telephone companies' push for legislation that repeals local franchising rules — the very rules which have ensured the near universal deployment of broadband technologies in Tennessee, from Nashville to Petersburg.

Indeed, both the president and the Democratic congressional leadership have enunciated goals of universal deployment of broadband technologies, goals the civil rights community shares. This is particularly important, given the need for our nation to remain globally competitive, nurture young entrepreneurs, and promote a ladder of opportunity for all.

The local franchise rules are one of America's only national broadband policies — one which some are now seeking to vilify.

Far from deterring competition, local franchises have fostered competition and easily welcome new entrants, such as phone companies seeking to be the fourth or fifth video provider in most markets. Companies frequently admit to Wall Street that they are "very successful now in getting franchising. So we don't see that as an issue."

Finally, don't hold your breath waiting for dramatic price cuts as a result of telephone entry into a competitive cable marketplace. Bell executives admit — and nearly every expert agrees — that they will not engage in a price war with cable companies. With a policy likely to result in less investment and few price cuts — what is in it for consumers?

Dr. E. Faye Williams, Esq.  
National Chair,  
National Congress of Black Women  
Board Member,  
Broadband Everywhere  
Washington, D.C.